

In The Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for bonding an array of pile loops stitched onto a surface of a backing, each pile loop having a root portion that is held to the surface of a backing by a stitching thread, the process comprising the steps of :

prior to formation of the pile loops, applying a thermoplastic binder material having a predetermined melting point to the backing in the vicinity of the root portion of the loops ;

mechanically flexing the backing with the loops thereon into and out of the plane of the backing at a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder,

thereby to cause the binder material to melt and to flow and concentrate ~~in~~ the root portion of the pile loops , in the vicinity of the stitching thread underlaps holding the root portion to the backing, and near the surface of the backing adjacent to the root portions .

2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the thermoplastic binder material is applied to the surface of the backing.

3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by immersing the backing with the pile loops thereon in a liquid having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.

4. (Original) The process of claim 3 further comprising the step:

after immersion in the liquid, drying the backing.

5. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.

6. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing steam over the backing with the pile loops thereon.
7. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:
after passing steam over the backing, drying the backing.
8. (Original) The process of claim 7 wherein the backing is dried at a temperature of at least one hundred ten degrees Centigrade (110 °C) for at least 2 minutes.
9. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature is maintained by passing over the backing a heated gas having a temperature greater than the melting point of the binder.
10. (Original) The process of claim 1 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
11. (Original) The process of claim 6 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
12. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising the step:
prior to mechanically flexing the backing, scouring the pile loops to remove substantially all oil and finish therefrom.
13. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 2 wherein the thermoplastic binder is an amorphous binder in the

form of a powder having particle sizes in the range of one (1) to five hundred (500) microns, the powder binder having a melting point in the range from ~~about~~ eighty-five (85) to ~~about~~ one hundred degrees Centigrade (100 ° C).

14. Cancelled

15. Cancelled

16. (Original) The process of claim 13 wherein the powder binder is applied to the backing in the form of a slurry comprising the binder powder dispersed in a liquid vehicle,

wherein the process further comprises the step of:
after application of the binder slurry, heating the surface of the backing to a temperature greater than the melting point of the powder binder thereby to melt the powder binder to attach the same to the surface of the backing.

Serial No.: 09/727,207
Docket No.: RD8120USNA

Page 6

17. Cancelled

18. Cancelled

19. Cancelled

20. Cancelled

21. Cancelled

22. Cancelled

23. Cancelled

24. Cancelled

25. Cancelled

26. Cancelled

27. Cancelled